



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 West 15th Street, Suite 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

Ref: 8MO

June 11, 2008

Ms. Deborah L.R. Austin, Forest Supervisor,
Lolo National Forest
Building 24, Fort Missoula
Missoula,, MT 59804-7297

Re: CEQ 20080191; Fishtrap Final
Supplemental Environmental Impact
Statement and Record of Decision

Dear Ms. Austin:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region VIII Montana Office has reviewed the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the Fishtrap Project.

The EPA is pleased that you have incorporated the terms and conditions of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion for Bull Trout into the final selected alternative (Alternative 2-Modified). We support the selected alternative which would reduce sediment delivery to streams and improve channel function and hydrologic processes by the greatest amount over the long-term, and result in greater improvements in terms of reduced road density, increased wildlife connectivity and decreased wildlife fragmentation and disturbance. We appreciate the extent of proposed watershed restoration actions that benefit water quality and fisheries in the proposed project (i.e., closure of 149 miles of road and the numerous stream crossing removals; road maintenance/BMP improvements on 34 to 44 miles of road depending upon funding; woody debris placements in 1 mile of Fishtrap Creek to improve aquatic habitat), although we also recognize that some short-term adverse water quality impacts may occur during implementation of proposed vegetative treatments and road removal/improvement activities.

We also acknowledge your decision to avoid harvest treatments and to use only underburning in verified old growth habitat forest, although EPA does not oppose thinning from below treatments in old growth intended to reduce fire risks and promote long-term protection and sustainability of old growth forest habitat.



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Thank you for the opportunity to review and offer comments during the NEPA process. If you have any questions please contact Mr. Steve Potts of my staff in Helena at 406-457-5022 or in Missoula at 406-329-3313 or via e-mail at potts.stephen@epa.gov . Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/ John F. Wardell
Director
Montana Office

cc: Larry Svoboda/Julia Johnson, EPA 8EPR-N, Denver
Randy Hojem, Plains/Thompson Falls Ranger District, Plains